SCRIPT BITS!
Issue: Sonic the Hedgehog #171 (JAN'07)
Lead Story Pages: 1-2, 7, 9, 11-12
Back-up Story Pages: 1, 4, 6

Welcome one and all to **Script Bits!** This monthly feature will take roughly forty-five percent of a story in Archie Comic's *Sonic the Hedgehog* and present it to you as insight into the writing process.

Part of the fun of this feature will be comparing what was written and what saw print. Sometimes the vision is tweaked as the artists interpret the script. Sometimes the original idea doesn't work once put on paper and must be adjusted from there. Sometimes the artist has a stroke of genius and does something different than what the script calls for - and it's for the better!

So pull out your copy of *Sonic the Hedgehog* #171 from January of 2007 and get ready to read along!

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Remembering "I Am"

Love it or hate it, the game *Shadow the Hedgehog* finally gave us the whole story on the beloved/reviled anti-hero. Okay, it circumvented any mention of a certain Gizoid, but I digress. Since Shadow's origins had remained fairly nebulous in the comic as well I felt I could incorporate the SegaSonic canon. Given that we'd also had a healthy dose of aliens during "Tossed in Space," the Black Arms wouldn't be completely out of left field. It's always easier to add than to introduce.

The problem with revealing Shadow's origin was two-fold. First was just how we were going to reveal it. The rule of "showing, not telling" was dangerous here because so much had to be shown. If we went the route of the games and had the Black Arms invade we'd be tied up for months. We'd have to wrestle with a very brutal fight for survival that wouldn't really fit in the theme of the book. And if we glossed over it in a single issue or a back-up it would miss the emotional impact of the story and feel like some bone thrown to the SegaSonic faithful. The Black Arms were written into their little hole in STH#170 for a reason, and I wasn't eager to pull them out.

This left us with the "telling" approach. Prof. Gerald's diary was the best vehicle of course, but it would be lots of talking. I needed some way to make it visually interesting and exciting. This is where the game helped me out the most. There are a couple of levels in *Shadow the Hedgehog* where he inexplicably enters into the digital world. (I count the giant glowing ball of light activated by karate-chop as

"inexplicable"). So as a nod to the games I had Nicole suck Sonic and Shadow into the digital diary.

While a part of me feels bad for not explaining the move aside from "Nicole did it," I also recognize that an explanation wasn't really needed. Sure, we could've spent a panel or two wading through techno-babble and slowed the story to a crawl, or we could take it on faith and just go with the flow of the story. If I erred, it was on the side of entertainment.

The second issue was that our main plot was a bunch of explanation. As witty or as interesting as it could be written, it would still be a bunch of word balloons. We needed something to move the story along. This is where I had the most trouble when conceptualizing the story. The easiest route would be a reprisal from Dr. Eggman. Shadow had just trashed his office and openly defied him, so a pursuit would make sense. But "Eggman attacks Freedom HQ" seemed wrong. It was too much in that the main villain was invading and being repelled in a single issue, and it was too little in that it was just a retaliatory strike; a hissy-fit with missiles.

I believe the idea that got the ball rolling was something Mike said on a whim. If memory serves, he jokingly suggested that Shadow steal Snively's hair. It was ludicrous. Ridiculous. Brilliant.

I absolutely loved it and ran with it. I'm sure Mike thought I'd gone insane.

With that initial silly thought I took it as far as I could go. Hair has always been a point of pride for Snively, so of course he'd want to strike back for the indignity. Having him arrive on Freedom HQ's doorstep demanding hair wasn't enough though. The tracers imbedded in them took it over the top and to just the right place of insanity. And how should he attack? I wanted to return to the animal-themed vehicles, but I wanted something appropriately odd. I'm not sure why I settled on a lobster, but it seemed to fit. That and "Egg Lobster," when said aloud, still makes me laugh. Try it. Egg Lobster!

Something I stumbled upon while writing "I Am" was Knuckles' contribution. He was initially in there because he's Knuckles and we all love Knuckles. But as I considered his motivation (outside of basic heroism) I came across a parallel I hadn't considered. Knuckles, at one point, knew nothing of his past or of his true purpose in life. He desperately sought answers and, for a time, was the rival and anti-hero to Sonic that Shadow is now. As a person Knuckles would sympathize with what Shadow was going through and it added a touch of gravitas to what would've otherwise been a silly, filler-fight with Snively.

Easter Eggs

- The problem with the digital diary was that it was shown to be a literal book-diary in StH#99. I'm assuming this was due to the creatives at the time not having much to work with in terms of inside information on *Sonic Adventure 2*. To rectify this I had the digital diary in disk format hidden within the book.
- When I wrote the setting for **Page 3**, I was thinking specifically of Dr. Eggman's library/bedroom on the Egg Carrier in *Sonic Adventure.* I didn't want something quite as garish, though, so I stuck to simply describing it and letting the art team work their magic.

- We were afraid that Maria's disease wouldn't make it to the final print since NIDS looks likes AIDS at a glance. This is why it's spelled out rather than using the acronym. I was especially happy to include it since it was a piece of story lost to the average American game-player.
- "Mobian Nicole" was first introduced by Tania del Rio in StH#151's "Stargazing." It was a fantastic concept that I wanted to explore it further, but was hampered by the very legitimate limitations introduced in the story. Having "Mobian Nicole" exist within a purely digital world got around that hurdle and helped to introduce her to Sonic, new readers, and refresh the concept in long-time readers' minds.
- The story's title and Shadow's ending monologue were inspired by the *Shadow the Hedgehog* game's main title theme and the ending monologues for each storyline.
- Knuckles has his Extreme Gear airboard from *Sonic Riders*

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG - "I AM"

Sonic the Hedgehog #171 - Version 3.0 - January 25, 2006

PGS: 14
D.O.S.:
CODE#:
C.C.:

PAGE ONE

PANEL 1 - Largest panel on the page. We're in main control room of DR. EGGMAN's base (see S#168). There are signs of struggle in the room. SHADOW is at center. SHADOW holds EGGMAN by the bottom hem of EGGMAN's shirt (belly-level). EGGMAN flails and yells angrily at SHADOW. SNIVELY lies curled at SHADOW's feet on the other side. SHADOW holds all of SNIVELY's hairs in his fist, keeping SNIVELY's head up. SNIVELY is gibbering pitifully.

TITLE at top-left and CREDITS on the monitors.

TITLE: I Am

CREDITS

Writer: IAN FLYNN
Pencils:
Inks:
Colors:
Letters:
Editor: MIKE PELLERITO
Managing Editor: VICTOR GORELICK
Editor-in-Chief: RICHARD GOLDWATER
Special thanks to: _____ at Sega Licensing

SHADOW
I will ask you one last time, doctor.
Where is Professor Gerald's diary?

EGGMAN
Grandfather's diary is **mine,** just like you, Shadow!
I **command** you to release me!

PANEL 2 - SHADOW turns his attention SNIVELY. SHADOW looks dangerously grim. SNIVELY panics. SHADOW tugs on the hairs.

SHADOW
Snively, where is the diary?

SNIVELY
Anything but the hair, I beg of you . . .!

SHADOW
The diary.

SNIVELY (burst balloon)
Uncle Robotnik's private study!
I swear!

PANEL 3 - SHADOW tosses EGGMAN aside and pulls the half-dozen hairs from SNIVELY's head. SNIVELY shrieks.

SHADOW
Very good.
This is for wasting my time.

SNIVLEY (breaks balloon, arching and diminishing)
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

<u>PAGE TWO</u>

PANEL 1 - Long panel to cap the top of the page. EGGMAN comes crawling along the floor, a keyboard and its chord wrapped around his head. SNIVELY clutches at his head and shrieks furiously at EGGMAN.

EGGMAN
You traitor!

SNIVELY
HE TOOK MY HAIR!!!

EGGMAN
So what?
Bald is beautiful!

SNIVELY (burst balloon)
THEY WERE MY LAST SIX HAIRS!!!

PANEL 2 - Eggman's Private Study. There is a large entertainment center to one side. The rest of the walls are comprised entirely out of bookcases. The shelves are in disarray and many of the books lay scattered on the floor. SHADOW stands at center and looks unguardedly relieved. SHADOW holds a worn and beaten leather-bound book. It is open. NOTE: SHADOW needs to still be holding the hairs.

SHADOW
At long last . . .
The diary of my creator . . .

PANEL 3 - Close-up on the interior of the book. We see the pages are false. There is a square cavity in the pages that houses a DVD. SHADOW lifts the DVD out of the cavity.

SHADOW
All the secrets, all the confusion . . .
It's almost over.

PANEL 4 - Close-up on SHADOW as he holds the DVD to his cheek, thinking. He is grim once more.

SHADOW
I cannot safely investigate it here, however.
I need comparable technology in a place I can trust . . .

<u>PAGE SEVEN</u>

PANEL 1 - The ARK. The halls are dark and claustrophobic with high ceilings. It's all shades of browns and greys. This is not a happy place. To add to the creepiness, the walls appear to be flaking apart, revealing featureless white spaces. SONIC, SHADOW, and FURRY NICOLE (see S#???) appear in the hall in a star-burst of light.

TEXT BOX
Inside Gerald's Diary

SONIC
So this is where you were created?

SHADOW
Yes.

SONIC
Homey.

PANEL 3 - SONIC and SHADOW wheel around on FURRY-NICOLE (F.NICOLE) F.NICOLE looks about the halls and looks concerned.

F.NICOLE
It's just as I feared.
Our very presence is accelerating the degradation.
We need to be quick.

SONIC
Nicole?!

PANEL 4 - F.NICOLE smiles bashfully. SONIC sets his hands on his hips and gives F.NICOLE a proud, appraising look. SHADOW rolls his eyes in disgust and marches away from them.

F.NICOLE
I . . . yes.
I've been investigating corporeal life as a side-project.*

SONIC
Sweet!
I like the look.

F.NICOLE
Thank you.
I've run into some difficulties, but . . .

SHADOW
I thought you said we needed to be quick.

EDITOR'S NOTE
*as seen in StH#151

PANEL 5 - SHADOW rounds a corner and faces the reader full-front. SHADOW gawks and looks haunted. SONIC and F.NICOLE hurry around and look over his shoulder, curious.

MARIA (unseen)
Shadow!

Welcome back!

SHADOW
You!

PAGE NINE

PANEL 1 - KNUCKLES runs outside to confront the enemy. SNIVELY pilots the EGG LOBSTER. SNIVELY is livid at the controls.
EGG LOBSTER - no reference, just my own insanity. The main body is roughly twice the length of a minivan. The cockpit is an open-topped pod right at the head. Its driven on six pointy legs. A pair of giant pinchers are mounted with the cockpit. The tail curves up overhead, scorpion-like, with a narrow barreled laser cannon on each of the five "feathers" at the end.

SNIVELY
I demand my hair back!
I have an Egg Lobster and I know how to use it!

KNUCKLES
No.

PANEL 2 - The left-hand pincer smashes into the ground. KNUCKLES hops onto the claw and starts running up the arm.

KNUCKLES
I know what it's like to be lost without a past.

SFX (impact)
CRASH!

PANEL 3 - KNUCKLES leaps and glides, veering off towards the left. SNIVELY snarls at him. Each of the tail-lasers fire, creating a set of "bars" that chase KNUCKLES off.

KNUCKLES
I won't let you take this moment from Shadow.

SFX (each laser - small)
Pyew!

SNIVELY
Then he shouldn't have taken my hair!

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL 1 - SONIC looks about the room nervously. SHADOW cuts SONIC an ugly look. GERALD looms into the panel.

SONIC
Yeah, can we get the abridged version, professor?
We're short on time here.

GERALD
Of course.
In short, Shadow, you are the ultimate protector of life on Mobius.

PANEL 2 - SHADOW looks on, stunned. GERALD pets MARIA's head affectionately, but looks sad. MARIA looks away, bashful but very aware of her illness.

SHADOW
I am?

GERALD
Initially, your body was to be the source for a cure.
Maria developed the rare **Neuro-Immuno Deficiency Syndrome**.
There is no cure, and I hoped to make one in you.

PANEL 3 - Wide shot. The background changes to show BLACK DOOM (see me for scans) amid a starry back-drop. We see the BLACK COMET (an asteroid that is bulbous at one end and tapers to a point) as well as a few BLACK SHIPS (three-armed starfish-like spaceships, their arms bent in like the spirals of a galaxy). SHADOW recoils at the sight. MARIA hides her face against GERALD.

GERALD
But there were barriers I could not break in my research.
Desperate, I sought the aid of **Black Doom,** a monstrous alien who wanted you to be his greatest weapon.
He helped me create you, the Ultimate Lifeform, and gave you his rare skills in Chaos Control.
Little did Black Doom know that I would later change you to be a champion for Mobius against him and his **Black Arms.**
The Black Arms will return to Mobius in **fifty years.**

PANEL 4 - Smaller panel - an aside. SONIC whispers to F.NICOLE.

F.NICOLE
Fifty years?
Then they're late, or . . .

SONIC

No worries, Nicole.
We found they're busy fighting with the Xorda.*
They won't be coming here any time soon.

EDITOR'S NOTE
*equally dangerous alien marauders as we discovered last issue!

PANEL 5 - SHADOW stares at the flaking ceiling, stupefied. GERALD places a hand on SHADOW's shoulder in a fatherly fashion. MARIA hugs GERALD's other side and smiles at SHADOW.

SHADOW
So . . . what am I, then?
A cure?
A weapon?

GERALD
You are a savior, Shadow.
I'm sorry so much has to be put on your shoulders, but you well prepared.
You were created with my love for the people of Mobius so that you may protect them.

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL 1 - SONIC and F.NICOLE recoil as the floor suddenly goes mostly white. Very few flakes of the world remain.

SONIC
Whoa!
No more floor!

F.NICOLE
The digital matrix is collapsing!
We have to get out!

PANEL 2 - F.NICOLE points into the white abyss. A doorway appears. The "outside" is green and circuit board-like. SONIC rushes off to the right side.

F.NICOLE
I'll make us a way out.
You get Shadow!

SONIC
Way ahead of you, Nicole!

PANEL 3 - SONIC tugs on SHADOW's arm. SHADOW resists and looks frantic. We can see what little is left of GERALD flaking away into white. The very back/fringe of MARIA starts to flake away too. The background is almost entirely white.

SONIC
Shadow, time to juice!

SHADOW
No!
I still have questions!
I **can't** leave Maria again!

MARIA
Shadow . . .

PANEL 4 - MARIA holds SHADOW's face in her hands and smiles down at him. SHADOW has tears standing in his eyes.

MARIA
You have to go and protect everyone now.
And you'll always have me . . .

SHADOW
. . . if I hold you in my heart.
Good-bye, Maria.

PANEL 5 - Small panel on the left of the page. The background is white. We see F.NICOLE standing in her digital doorway. SONIC leads SHADOW towards it. SHADOW looks back over his shoulder, torn.

PANEL 6 - Smaller panel, titled slightly to the right. SONIC and SHADOW are closer to F.NICOLE now. SHADOW looks straight ahead.

PANEL 7 - Smallest panel on the page. It teeters at a 45-degree angle to the right. We can barely make out the figures of F.NICOLE, SONIC and SHADOW at the green doorway amid an abyss of white.

Remembering "Enforcers"

"Enforcers" was one of those stories that had a bit of a time finding a home. There was no one element that made it hard to place, but rather it was what was going on with *Sonic* at the time. When it was initially written, "Enforcers" was going to run before STH#178-179's "Order from Chaos." This story was going to introduce Dr. Finitevus to Locke and explain his cameo keeping the Master Emerald intact. When "Enforcers" ran

out of my intended order we had to go back and rework the meeting between Locke and Dr. Finitevus so it made sense.

There were a number of goals for this story. First and foremost was laying the groundwork for "Enerjak: Reborn," a story arch that – as of this writing – hasn't even officially begun. We needed to see Locke's obsession with finding the Brotherhood of Guardians distracting him from his own people, and we get just that when he arrives late on the scene. We needed to see Dr. Finitevus active again since the last time we even heard from him was STH#165's "Leak," and that was only in passing. Dimitri's duplicity was our ticket to spelling out Dr. Finitevus's intentions without him wringing his own hands and going into villainous monologue.

Another point I wanted to touch upon was making the Destructix a serious threat. As the Fearsome Foursome and the band of rogues under Kodos and Snively they have been a joke. While I tried to increase their potency during "The Darkest Storm" (STH#162-164) they still got mopped up by the superior heroics numbers. So if you're a Destructix fan, revel in this small moment of glory for them.

Easter Eggs

- The family of echidnas one the first page, and who take the focus on the next to last page, are Wynmacher, Lara-Le and Kneecaps.
- Notice the large mushrooms? These show Echidnaopolis (such as it is) is in the Mushroom Hills, based on the first zone of *Sonic & Knuckles* for the Genesis.
- The fantastic effect of the onset of the rain was Tracy Yardley's idea. We had discussed the apparent lack of different weather or environments, and he applies that to this story.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG - ENFORCERS

Sonic the Hedgehog - #170 back-up - "Enforcers" - v5.0 - 7/15/06

PGS: 6
D.O.S.:
CODE#:
C.C.:

PAGE ONE

PANEL 1 - The rustic village or ECHIDNAOPOLIS (see S#151). The buildings are skeletal, showing signs of being attacked, and there are some localized fires. Echidnas run about in terror as DINGO SOLDIERS (see S#138) attack. There is a large text box at the top. If you can, have the KNUCKLES ICON (see any Knuckles issue) molded into the top-left corner of the text box. Title and credits along the bottom.

TEXT BOX
Knuckles the Echidna left Angel Island and the Master Emerald to better protect Mobius.

His father, Locke, has taken over the Guardian duties - but with decreasing intensity.
Locke is desperately searching for his forefathers, the Brotherhood of Guardians, and now will do **anything** to find them . . .

TEXT BOX
Echidnaopolis, Angel Island

TITLE: Enforcers

CREDITS
Writer: IAN FLYNN
Pencils:
Inks:
Colors:
Letters:
Editor: MIKE PELLERITO
Managing Editor: VICTOR GORELICK
Editor-in-Chief: RICHARD GOLDWATER
Special thanks to: _____ at Sega Licensing

PANEL 2 - WYNMACHER hunches protectively over LARA-LE and KNEECAPS (see S#139-140) They are all trapped against the side of a building. A DINGO SOLDIER advances with an arm-sword (see S#138)

WYNMACHER
There's nothing left to take!
Leave us in peace!

PANEL 3 - Focus on the DINGO SOLDIER with dramatic shadows. He raises his sword as if to strike.

DINGO
How about I let you rest in peace, echidna scum!

PANEL 4 - The echidnas look up in surprise as SGT. SIMIAN punches the DINGO SOLDIER away. SIMAIN's arm gets full extension and the DINGO is thrown from his feet by the impact.

SFX (impact - fist/face)
WHOP!!!

PANEL 5 - Close-up on SIMIAN while we see as much of Echidnaopolis as you can give us. Show whatever DESTRUCTIX (see S#162 for roster and reference) you can fighting off DINGO SOLDIERS and winning easily. Add echidnas in distress if you have room. Bonus points if you can squeeze in DRAGO getting hurt.

SIMIAN
Don’t worry, folks.
(logo)The Destructix
are here now.

PAGE FOUR

PANEL 1 - LOCKE regards the ring quietly, unsure. FINITEVUS smiles - muted wickedly - to himself.

LOCKE
Perhaps . . .

FINITEVUS
If you prefer, I could attempt to summon Knuckles to assist us . . .?

PANEL 2 - Same layout as last panel. LOCKE closes his hand over the WARP RING and glares ahead. FINITEVUS smiles knowingly.

LOCKE
No.
Knuckles has chosen his place in the world.

FINITEVUS
As you wish, Guardian.

PANEL 3 - LOCKE flips the ring like a coin. It tumbles end-over-end into the background and grows as it does. Show multiple transparent "rings" to show the motion. It ends with a full-sized WARP RING hanging in the air. The interior leads to a jungle.

SFX (ring)
FWASH!

PANEL 4 - LOCKE looks back over his shoulder, stern. FINITEVUS bows with a flourish of his cape.

LOCKE
I will return frequently to check up on you.

FINITEVUS
But of course.
I hope that we will eventually win your trust.

PAGE SIX

NOTE: Please leave about 1/5th the bottom of the page blank for the TEASER and INDICA.

PANEL 1 - DIMITRI's head floats over to FINITEVUS. FINITEVUS regards the MASTER EMERALD.

DIMITRI
That's what you said when you took me apart, bit by bit!
This indignity cannot go on, much less my life.

FINITEVUS
Calm down, Dimitri.
I know what I'm doing.

PANEL 2 - FINITEVUS runs his hand down the side of the MASTER EMERALD.

FINITEVUS
The Dingo Regime will be crushed,
The Legion will be unified . . .

PANEL 3 - We see FINITEVUS's face reflected back to us from the surface of the MASTER EMERALD. We should be *greatly* disturbed.

FINITEVUS
. . . and the world will know the glory of your old identity.
The power and name of **Enerjak** will be known once more.

TEASER
Dr. Finitevus is plotting the return of Knuckles' most powerful enemy!
How long until the plan comes to fruition?
Stay tuned!

INDICIA